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14. ABSTRACT After years of neglect, the United States has made Afghanistan the central front in the war on terrorism. Experts state that the resurgence is not the former Taliban, and al-Qaida in Afghanistan highlighted the limitations in the current strategy, which favored a top down approach and failed to consider the effects a trickle down policy would have on the population. This paper will analyze how a bottom-up strategy that recognized the power inherent in the regional government and its people, coupled with a top down approach could have accelerated the achievement of the stated strategic or U.S. national goals and possibly prevented the resurgence of the Islamists and the corresponding increase in violence and instability in Afghanistan. This paper's thesis is that had the United States not underestimated the scope, costs, and difficulty of rebuilding a nation ravaged by decades of violence, it would have considered the importance of the regional and tribal government organization in creating a stable and secure Afghanistan. By incorporating these stakeholders in the nascent government, it is possible that a secure environment would have emerged leading to political and economic reform.					
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**NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
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AFGHANISTAN: A PATH TO SUCCESS

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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Abstract

After years of neglect, the United States has made Afghanistan the central front in the war on terrorism. Experts state that the resurgence is not the former Taliban, but rather a neo-Taliban that is smarter, and more perceptive as well as adept at undermining American policies. The lack of progress in Afghanistan highlighted the limitations in the current strategy, which favored a top down approach and failed to consider the effects a trickle down policy would have on the population. This paper will analyze how a bottom-up strategy that recognized the power inherent in the regional government and its people, coupled with a top down approach could have accelerated the achievement of the stated strategic or U.S. national goals and possibly prevented the resurgence of the Islamists and the corresponding increase in violence and instability in Afghanistan. This paper's thesis is that had the United States not underestimated the scope, costs, and difficulty of rebuilding a nation ravaged by decades of violence, it would have considered the importance of the regional and tribal government organization in creating a stable and secure Afghanistan. By incorporating these stakeholders in the nascent government, it is possible that a secure environment would have emerged leading to political and economic reform.

INTRODUCTION

Anyone watching the news today will see that the United States appears to be succeeding in Iraq. Iraq was the second front in the War on Terror which began in March 2003. The United State's strategic goal was to topple the government of Saddam Hussein. Over the past six years, violence has been reduced, elections were held, oil is flowing, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) have been able to address many of the basic needs of the population. In short, there is a flurry of activity in the cities as the country rebuilds its foundation of security and governance. For example, the Iraqi Army and Police are routinely seen out in the streets providing security and enforcing their laws. The United States will end combat operations and reduce a significant number of their armed forces by August of 2010.

In contrast, Afghanistan is a different story. Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) launched in October 2001 with the primary stated goals of removing the Taliban government and the capture Osama bin Laden, the al-Qaeda leader believed to be responsible for the September 11th attacks on the United States. Since the commencement of OEF, the Neo-Taliban and al-Qaeda have reemerged and have taken control over parts of the country with deadly consequences. The Neo-Taliban's principal objective remains the Islamization of Afghanistan. Though still a Pashtun-dominated movement, it is making inroads in the Uzbek, and Tajik provinces where it continues to recruit Afghans that are disgruntled and disenfranchised. Additionally, the Neo-Taliban are becoming technologically savvy using DVDs to spread their message, for example, since the reemergence of non-state actors, the U.S. and Coalition forces have been experiencing more violence and an increase in casualties. The frequency of attacks has increased along with a growing sophistication of

tactics and techniques. At the same time, the population of Afghanistan continues to suffer a poor standard of living; illiteracy and poverty remain high, and the negative impact of narcotics trafficking has not been reduced. Analyzing the media reports on Afghanistan can lead one to believe that the United States has no experience with rebuilding a country in the aftermath of conflict and war. However, the truth is that United States has a long history of contributing to nation-building after violent conflict; such as Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo.

With that, the question remains on how to explain the minimal progress in achieving stability and security in Afghanistan after nearly eight years of combat operations. The answer to the dilemma rests with the failure to properly plan for the reconstruction phase after kinetic operations ended and adequately prepare for the critical and distinctive elements of state building for a post-Taliban Afghanistan. In particular, the importance of the socio-cultural differences between local, regional, and central government functions was overlooked. Vital links between tribal leaders, the regional leaders and central government are essential in organizing and creating a stable and secure Afghanistan. By incorporating these key stakeholders in the emerging government structure, in the initial reconstruction process the current instability and fragile political landscape may have been mitigated. As a result the outlook for Afghanistan would not be as bleak, allowing the U.S. and coalition partners to be closer to attaining their goals of a stable strong government based on democratic principles. Had the United States not underestimated the scope, cost, and complexity of rebuilding a state with a long and complicated history of political violence and instability, it might have considered the strategic value of a “bottom-up approach” to complement the “top-down” policy to governance .

History

To understand the complex problems that plague Afghanistan one has to understand, or at the least be familiar with its history. Afghanistan, often called the crossroads of Central Asia and a gateway to India has been in some state of war for the better part of two millennia. Alexander the Great entered in 328 BC¹ followed by scores of conquerors that brought with them religion, languages, customs, culture, and people. The result was not a homogenized society, but rather a disjointed and fractured society built around a tribe and clan system. Islamic conquerors arrived in the 7th century. By the 9th century, “most inhabitants of what is present day Afghanistan, Pakistan, southern parts of the former Soviet Union and northern India had converted to Sunni Islam.”² Genghis Khan invaded around 1220 AD and Afghanistan fell under Mongol Rule until the early 16th century. Notorious for laying waste and destroying many civilizations, Genghis Khan and the Mongol invaders “failed to destroy the Islamic culture, and by mid thirteenth century, his descendants themselves became Muslims.”³ Descendants of Genghis Khan, the Mughal’s, remained in power through the end of the 17th century, until Nadir Shah wrested power from the Ghilzai Pashtuns and thus until his death in April 1748 Afghanistan was “nominally ruled by Pashtuns.”⁴ In the intervening time period, Afghanistan became a battleground in the rivalry between imperial Britain and czarist Russia, known as the Great Game. In 1893, the Durand Line, formed a border between Afghanistan and British India, what is now present day Pakistan, with the former gaining full independence in 1919. Power changed hands many times leading up to the

¹ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5380.htm>, Background notes on Afghanistan on U.S. State departments website, accessed ((27 MAY 2009)

² <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/afghanistan/afghanistan.html>, Federal Research Division Country Studies, Library of Congress, 4, (accessed, 29 Mar 2009)

³ Ibid, 5

⁴ Ibid, 5

Soviet invasion, during the occupation and after their withdrawal, shifting between democratic and monarchic forms of government. The Soviet Union's defeat and expulsion by what essentially amounted to an alliance of various Afghan factions known as mujahideen resulted in a civil war, and ultimately gave rise to the government of the Taliban. Beginning in 1994, the Taliban or "religious students" came "forth vowing to cleanse the nation of excesses" and initially had the support of the local Afghan population who were weary of the lawlessness and fighting.⁵ The Taliban were seen as a movement to return Afghanistan to peace and prosperity, though they began to lose public favor after their attempted implementation of Sharia (Islamic) Law, and its strict interpretation and persecution of all who resisted. The Taliban were defeated by the United States in 2001 after their refusal to turn over Usama bin Laden, who was believed to be the mastermind for the September 11th, attacks, and Hamid Karzai, a pashtun was elected as its president in 2004. However, as noted above, after nearly eight years of operations the road to stability and security remains a perilous one with an increase in the insurgent threat, and narcotics trafficking as well as general lawlessness. This paper will analyze the overall failures encountered by the United States and later the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) with respect to the state-building mission it undertook after defeating the Taliban in 2001. The paper will also show how a bottom up approach that focused on the inherent power of the people and the use of soft power is instrumental to mission success in Afghanistan during military operations other than war (MOOTW). Lastly, as the United States prepares to surge its military to regain control of the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan, this paper will conclude with recommendations which incorporate a bottom up perspective to avoid an outcome clouded with images Soviet déjà vu. That is, avoiding the legacy a more powerful state actor who

⁵ Ibid, 67

failed to win measured success in Afghanistan but rather one who gains a free and democratic ally in the region. Background

Afghanistan is a landlocked country of 647, 500 km sq or just slightly smaller than the state of Texas. The climate is arid to semi-arid, and has a population of approximately 33.6 million, with a dismal literacy rate of 28 percent⁶. It has one of the lowest per capita Gross Domestic Products (GDP) at \$800 (2008 est), and diverse ethnic population consisting of Pashtun 42%, Tajik 27%, Hazara 9%, Uzbek 9% . A religious composite of Sunni Muslims making up 80%, Shia Muslims 19%, and with an average life expectancy of approximately 44 years of age and with several serious challenges facing it as noted above.⁷

The task of nation building, or more appropriately state building, which is defined as “constructing political institutions, or strengthening existing ones and promoting economic development,” in Afghanistan would not be easy.⁸ In the United States, the two terms are used interchangeably though the appropriate term should be state building. As the Soviets discovered, and the British before them, Afghanistan “is a society with strong tribal elements in which centralized power has at best been only tolerated as a necessary stabilizing presence, secondary to clan and tribal identification and loyalty”⁹. Therefore, removing the Taliban would prove to be the easy part. The difficult task that lay ahead was the rebuilding of the political institutions, which laid in ruins after nearly 25 years of continuous warring between the differing Afghan warlords.

⁶ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>, CIA factbook figures on Afghanistan, (accessed 15 APR 2009)

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Francis Fukuyama, *Nation-Building: Beyond Afghanistan and Iraq*, (Baltimore, MD The Johns Hopkins University Press 2006) 3

⁹ Richard Schultz and Andrea J. Dew, *Insurgents, Terrorists and Militias*, (Chichester, NY, Columbia University Press, 2006), 151

Afghanistan was completely decimated: “The Afghan civil war in the 1990’s had destroyed the cities and infrastructure as warring factions bombarded Kabul and destroyed or looted the infrastructure, roads, power and telephone lines, water, and sewer pipes, houses, shops schools and hospitals looked like burned out shells or upturned carcasses.”¹⁰ As stated earlier, the problems facing the United States and its international partners in rebuilding Afghanistan though robust were not insurmountable. After all, the United States had succeeded in rebuilding both Germany and Japan after WWII and had recent experience in Somalia, Haiti, Cambodia, East Timor, and the former Yugoslavia.

The central challenge is that in the United States Government’s (USG) view, they and the United States military were not in the business of nation or state building. In fact, President Bush, who made the decision to lead the country to war in Afghanistan, was quoted as saying “I don't think our troops ought to be used for what's called nation-building. I think our troops ought to be used to fight and win war”¹¹ and as Francis Fukuyama, a noted and respected American philosopher who has written extensively on the subject, observed the “United States Department of Defense (DOD) while a critical player in any nation-building exercise, lacked the institutional capability to organize such a complex operation.”¹²

Furthermore, in what appeared to be a series of self-defeating and shortsighted actions, the USG failed to implement Presidential Decision Directive 56, (PDD 56) which was a series of

¹⁰ Ahmed Rashid, *Decent Into Chaos: The U.S. and the Disaster in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and central Asia*, (New York, Penguin Group USA, 2009)

¹¹ <http://www.debates.org/pages/trans2000b.html>, quote from Second Presidential Debate with Al Gore on 11OCT2000 (Commission On Presidential Debates 2000), (accessed 17 APR 2009)

¹² Francis Fukuyama, *State Building: Governance and World Order in the 21st Century*, (New York, Cornell University Press, 2004), 102

recommendations based on experiences in “Managing Complex Contingency Operations”¹³. Additionally, DOD’s closure of the Army’s Peacekeeping Institute in Carlisle, which “served as the only training institute for nation-building tasks”¹⁴ resulted in a lack of capacity, institutional knowledge, and a complete failure to develop synergies among the various government agencies that would be tasked with nation building in the not to distant future. The preceding actions would come back to haunt the USG as it was forced to engage in state building efforts in the early part of the 21st century.

Starting with a pejorative view of nation building, and lacking any recent or credible knowledge or understanding of Afghanistan’s culture, history, or requirements due to its abandonment of Afghanistan, the USG nonetheless went to war with al-Qaeda, and the Taliban in Afghanistan in October 2001. Afghanistan, after the Soviet Union’s withdrawal had ceased to be strategically important to the United States. As a result of its seemingly newfound strategic insignificance few resources were allocated for Afghanistan.

Afghanistan’s status was best summed up in a report by the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy by Georgetown University’s Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service where it wrote “What was seen just a few years before as a major battlefield of the Cold War was now a messy entanglement in a backwater country with little strategic importance”¹⁵. After the tragic events of September 11th, Central Command under General Tommy Franks, lacking an invasion plan, and with pressure to act, quickly proceeded to engage in combat operations in a new and creative method. The innovative plan for new operational tactics

¹³ <http://clinton2.nara.gov/WH/EOP/NSC/html/documents/NSCDOC2.html>, white paper detailing key policy on managing complex contingency operations, specifically nation building, (accessed 20 APR 2009)

¹⁴ Rashid, *Decent Into Chaos*, 173

¹⁵ http://isd.georgetown.edu/Afghan_2_WR_report.pdf, a report on the U.S and Soviet Proxy war (accessed 29 May 2009)

was an idea brought forth by the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The plan, as envisioned was to utilize United States Special Operations Forces (SOF) collaborating with the native anti-Taliban warlords who had collaborated and become known as the Northern Alliance. Their armies, which had been bought to the tune of millions of dollars, would act as the ground force. The Northern Alliance, which consisted of Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras, minority tribes from the mostly northwest part of the country and a minority anti-Taliban Pashtun, had united to oppose the Pashtun based and mostly southern Taliban. The SOF role was that of advisors, and spotters to guide US Air Force and Navy combat aircraft onto Taliban targets. The plan seemed to fit right in with USG thinking at the time, which is that a light footprint would be required to win the war in Afghanistan. The partnership would result in “cheapest war America was ever to fight.”¹⁶

In crisis situations, the Joint Operation Planning and Execution System (JOPES) would use crisis action planning to formulate a response and would include a desired end state to resolve the crisis. The failure to properly plan for such a major operation, which went against established national and DOD planning policies, despite the fact that a robust system for planning existed would only serve to highlight the shortcomings as the situation in Afghanistan deteriorated. The failure of the United States to commit a sizable force to provide security while the fragile government was reconstituted and the country rebuilt would result in a difficult transition period as the United States handed control for the security in Afghanistan to the NATO led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).

¹⁶ Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 63

The ISAF was equally under resourced and underfunded when it began operations in Afghanistan, with a “force that had grown to 4700 by March 2003”¹⁷ and which until October 2003 had no authority to act outside of the capital city of Kabul. The problems kept growing: “NATO had no standing army, no central budget, and its deployments were paid for by individual countries.”¹⁸ The issue with NATO member countries was that though its individual countries armed forces totaled approximately 2 million troops, “their governments had won support from its parliaments by promising that their military troops would be carrying out peacekeeping and reconstructing missions.”¹⁹

To understand the difficulties that NATO faced, one only had to look at the Germans actions and restrictions. The German forces built an almost impregnable compound, from which they operated they were isolated from the population and they were prohibited from night operations. They could not move Afghan troops in their helicopters, and required an ambulance any time they went on patrol, thereby making foot patrols nearly impossible”.²⁰

Therefore, the value of NATO as a security force or armed force responsible for combat and counterinsurgency operations, missions, that were in dire need of support, because of the burgeoning insurgency and instability in Afghanistan was very low. By 2005, the USG was having its own problems in Iraq, its second front on the War on Terror, the combat and political terrain were suffering from the same maladies that affected Afghanistan.

“The security situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated resulting in the highest levels of violence since the U.S. and NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) began

¹⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Security_Assistance_Force, general facts about ISAF and troop levels by year, (accessed 21 APR 2009)

¹⁸ Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, LIII

¹⁹ Ibid., 354

²⁰ Ibid., 354

their involvement in Afghanistan”.²¹ Narcotics remain a significant challenge propelling Afghanistan into the top spot for opium production with “Afghanistan supplying “93% of the world opium”.²² The “Government Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) is one of the weakest governments in the world.”²³ Corruption, incompetence, lack of capacity, illegitimacy, lack of accountability and ineffectiveness, are traits inherent in the GIROA resulting in a reduced capacity at governing. Afghanistan’s human rights record remains “poor”, with violence against women and minorities factions such as Hazara’s, Sikhs and Hindus, prevalent.²⁴

After the overthrow of the Taliban it was widely assumed that United States, “with its experience in modern nation building”²⁵ would finally allocate the resources required to properly confront the developing situation in Afghanistan. After “September 11th 2001, it became clear that weak or failed states could sponsor terrorism that threaten the core security of the world’s sole military.”²⁶ With the state- building effort stalled, and an upcoming as of May 2009 American troop surge, it is critical for a review of the policies that lead to the above failures. In order to build a path for success, it is necessary to ask what went wrong, and how can we ensure that what the legacy of war in Afghanistan is grounded in democratic principles with the security and desire of the population that Afghanistan not become a safe haven for terrorists once again.

²¹ Department of Defense, *Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, (1 Jan 2009), Report to Congress in accordance with 2008 National Defense Authorization Act, 7

²² Ibid, 9

²³ Ibid, 10

²⁴ Kenneth Katzman, *Afghanistan: Post War Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy*, Washington, DC 29 SEP 2009, a report prepared for Members and Committees of Congress, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf>, (accessed, 10 APR 2009), 15

²⁵ Fukuyama, *Nation Building*, 64

²⁶ Ibid., 2

Discussion and Analysis

The modern day government of Afghanistan, the GIRoA, was borne out of the Bonn Agreement that was signed on December 5th, 2001. The Bonn agreement “formed the Afghan interim administration, headed by Hamid Karzai, and authorized an international peace force to maintain security in Kabul until elections could be held. It also specified the need to cooperate with the international community on counter-narcotics, crime and terrorism and applied the constitution of 1964 until a permanent constitution could be signed.”²⁷ A permanent constitution was approved in December 2003, after a constitutional loya jirga consisting of 502 delegates selected in U.N. run caucuses. Presidential elections were held in 2004 and with over 70% of the population voting, they elected Hamid Karzai, a Pashtun, from Khandahar region, emanating from the Popalzai clan, of the Durrani tribe. However, by the time the elections occurred in 2004, the Northern Alliance leaders, many of them warlords with powerful militias, had occupied Kabul after defeating the Taliban and began appointing governmental positions among their supporters. “Virtually, all the new ministers, governors, and staff members were Tajiks, and Uzbeks, from the Panjshir valley”²⁸ What was missing from the government were members of the largest ethnic tribe in the country, the Pashtuns from the south, southeast, and northwest. Not surprisingly, the effects of this power grab was that the legitimacy of the Karzai government came into question almost immediately. Whether they knew it or not, the United States and international community, along with Karzai government, had given the opposition fighters in the field a reason to keep fighting. The failure to understand the ramifications of a government partial to an ethnic tribe and lacking representatives from the majority Pashtun would make governing over the

²⁷ Katzman, Afghanistan: Post War Governance, 22

²⁸ Fukuyama, Nation Building, 127

unrepresented people a a difficult if not impossible task based on Afghan history. Initially, Hamid Karzai and his government, was set up as the interim authority. After the election, his presidency, was best summed up by a report issued by the International Crisis Group:

Anti-Taliban Pashtun leaders in the south and east, as in earlier years, failed to demonstrate cohesiveness. Commanders raced to establish their own authority, creating a patchwork of predatory, competing fiefdoms. A culture of impunity was allowed to take root in the name of “stability”, with abusers free to return to their old ways as long as they mouthed allegiance to the central government. Human security was sublimated to what was seen as the quickest route to state security²⁹

The newly formed government had failed to address the needs of its population, which were securing borders, providing internal security and policing, making intrastate travel safe, providing medical and education help, distributing jobs fairly and allocating resources wisely. The disappointment of the Karzai government to become an all inclusive and representative body that was responsive to the needs of its population meant that in those provinces that were not represented, their essential necessities would have to be met elsewhere. The failure of the Karzai government to recognize and understand that the power, or center of gravity of his newly elected government rested with the people would ultimately lead to the resurgence of the revitalized Taliban in the Pashtun dominated region of Afghanistan. With their hopes for a representative government that would provide for their needs lost and the failure of the United States, United Nations, and the NATO organization to bring relief, provide security, and other expected services, the local Afghan people were compelled to return to the local tribal and clan leaders as they had done for centuries past, for these services. Afghanistan’s society makeup was that of tribal factions such as the Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras, and Uzbeks with the Pashtuns being the largest as noted above. Tribes, which are a unit of sociopolitical organization consisting of a number of families, clans, or other groups who share a common ancestry and

²⁹ International Crisis Group, *Countering Afghanistan’s Insurgency: No Quick Fixes*, (2 Nov 2006), http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/asia/south_asia/123_countering_afghanistans_insurgency.pdf, (accessed, 30 Apr 2009) quote detailing how Afghan government lost legitimacy and made reconstruction difficult, 5

culture and among whom leadership is typically neither formalized nor permanent had long been the dominant form of government in Afghanistan and is what gave rise to the warlord.³⁰ Colonel William F. Roy, in his paper, *Krayola Khans*, described the warlord as “someone who knows the lay of the land and use their militia to control the population is seen by some as a hero, defender of their land and people and can affect the battle space either positively or negatively.”³¹ With the nascent GIRoA being pulled in so many directions and with the distractions of the resurgent Taliban, it was easy to lose sight of the fact that the instability in the country was because the people’s needs were not being met and thus were unhappy. The Afghan people did not care who built their schools, or built their roads, provided funding for their medical needs, or food during draughts, provided their basic services, or security from criminal elements, only that the services were provided.

Unfortunately, for the GIRoA and the international community attempting to establish a central government presence in Afghanistan, the missteps in governing allowed these warlords to maintain their prestige and respond to the Afghan grievances, at the local level which gave rise to the insurgency that was based on the power of the people.

The Taliban, and those before them that came to power, did so only after disaffected Afghans having endured years of war, poverty, and general lawlessness decided they had had enough and demanded change. It was enough to unite the fragmented society behind a common cause, which is what happened again after the United States ejected the Taliban. The collective power of the people had spoken, they had certain expectations from the west

³⁰ Houghton Mifflin Company, The Free Dictionary, <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/Houghton>, (accessed 30 Apr 2009)

³¹ William Roy, *Krayola Khans: An analysis of U.S. Operational Commanders and Indigenous Warlords*, (Newport, Naval War College, 09 May 2006),9

after ridding them of an oppressive and unresponsive and demanded and were willing to give national governance a chance.

Therefore, it is important to define what power is, not that it's easy to do: "Power is like the weather. Everyone depends on it and talks about it, but few understand it. Power is also like love, easier to experience than to define and at the most general level power is the ability to get outcomes one wants."³² The world is constantly changing and it is important to recognize that the concept of power has changed with it. It is generally agreed that there are three methods use to influence others: co-opting, inducements, or force. The latter two were coercive in nature and were used by the United States to both remove the regime and install a new one as the interim government under Hamid Karzai.

The anti-Taliban tribal factions as noted above were bribed, thereby inducing them, to either fight with the United States or sit on the sidelines and do nothing to deter the process. After the ouster of the Taliban, those same power brokers, were again induced to refrain from their their damaging activities while the United States proceeded to ensure the sovereignty of the newly installed regime without worrying about its legitimacy among the Afghans. The fourth type of power is soft power, which is the "the ability to shape others preferences."³³ and the best used to controlling the population by co-opting them. Therefore, in the practical sense, "soft power is not having to use either carrots or sticks"³⁴ The failure of the United States to employ its soft power by employing the local Afghan population toward building schools, roads, hospitals and allowing the Afghans a measure of self-determination early on in the conflict doomed the Karzai government. Greg Mortenson, writer of *Three Cups of Tea*, recounts how he met many "Taliban, who were jihadi in theory only, who were smart

³² Joseph S. Nye Jr, *Soft Power: The Means to Success In World Politics*, (New York, Public Affairs, 2004), 1

³³ Ibid, 5

³⁴ Ibid, 6

guys that would much rather work as a telecommunication technician than a Taliban fighter if a job like that had been available.”³⁵ Had the USG, and the international community adopted a bottom up approach and created an opportunity for the Afghans by providing them the basic services they so desperately needed such as security, jobs, finances, guidance and nurturing as part of a robust and cohesive plan of regime change, the warlords’ influence would have been minimized and the Afghan landscape would look much different. The bottom up approach would have recognized the inherent power of the people to provide for their own needs.

The supporters of a top down approach would most likely point to the success of the Germany and Japan as a example of why it was the favored policy. However, in those examples the countries possessed a similar levels of devastation, the government institutions were well respected and had established whereas in Afghanistan they were not. Giving credence to the importance of a bottom up approach, Adrian Bogart III’s, book *One Valley at a Time* details how a group of Army Special Forces established a base of operations in the insurgents’ back yard and through a series of operations and by co-opting the locals came to clear the area of insurgents and Taliban. Thus, by co-opting the the locals his SF team was able to bring security to the Lwara Province so that true rebuilding efforts could begin.

Understanding why the Afghans fought was the key in this war. The failure to understand their motivations and desires for “good governance, reconstruction and development, and humanitarian relief”³⁶ were key reasons the unrepresented Pashtuns turned to the Taliban.

³⁵ Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin, *Three Cups of Tea: One Man’s Mission to Promote Peace...One School at a Time*, (New York, Penguin Books, 2006), 167

³⁶ Department of Defence, *Progress Toward Stability and Security*, 11

Conclusions

For the profession of arms, it's no longer sufficient just to be militarily proficient. You really need to understand dimensions beyond the military dimensions. You need to understand politics and economics. And you need to understand cultures. These aren't purely military operations anymore... ”

-General Anthony Zinni, USMC 2003

Afghanistan has many problems, but imagine if there had been a robust planning effort that would have considered all phases of the operation. If instead of rushing in to war, the United States would have taken the time to set clear strategic objectives, and taken the time to build a coalition like George H.W. Bush had done with the first Gulf War. What would Afghanistan look like if after transitioning to the Military Operations Other Than War, the Security Stability Reconstruction and Reconstruction (SSSTR) plan had properly resourced and a long term investment and commitment was made? Fortunately for United States and its NATO allies, we don't have to imagine any of this anymore.

By 2006, a concerted strategic review with a wide array of interested parties including community and provincial representatives, the private sector, civil society, non-government organizations (NGOs), the United Nations, donors and other members of the international community, government ministries and departments was undertaken and which resulted in the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS). The purpose of ANDS was to map out a comprehensive plan for meeting the objective of the Afghan Compact. Several initiatives were implemented to incorporate a bottom up strategy. The Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) concept was introduced, and though underfunded and understaffed at its inception, is now operating in the majority of the Afghan provinces. The

intent of the PRT was to meld the elements of hard and soft power and interact and interface directly with the provincial governors and assist them in governing and reconstruction efforts.

Though Afghanistan is facing a formidable challenge, after years of neglect and broken promises, it is finally getting the attention it rightly deserves. Employing a strategic plan inspired by the Iraq war playbook, the COIN strategy of “clear, hold, build” is being applied in Afghanistan to deal with the insurgency. Together with the an increase in forces and funding pouring into Afghanistan, the Afghanistan government will now be capable of providing security in areas outside of Kabul where the resurgent Taliban had settled. With the government reasserting it control over those areas via the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police, the delivery of services and humanitarian relief will increase. With the newfound security, and stability the Afghans will be empowered to “build human capital, institutions, and infrastructure necessary to achieve a stable, secure and prosperous Afghanistan.

If we had truly invested the time and effort in Afghanistan that it required after our proxy war with the Soviet Union, instead of declaring it strategically insignificant, it is doubtful that Afghanistan would have become a failed state. Remaining engaged with Afghanistan would have resulted in the USG having the ability to field a credible team of military and civilian experts capable of formulating a strategically sound policy should the need for combat operations required. Unfortunately, the USG failure doomed this country to becoming a failed state that became a breeding ground for terrorists. The basic failure was in securing the population and building early local ownership of the situation, which the Afghan so desperately wanted.

Recommendations

If you think ten thousand men sufficient, send twenty.
If one million pounds is thought enough, give two; you will
save both blood and treasure in the end. A large force will
terrify, and engage many to join you, a middling one will
encourage resistance, and gain no friends.
-Lieutenant General Thomas Gage, 1774

This is sage advice from the British general who fought in the American Revolution. If we had adopted this advice, it is doubtful that Afghanistan would look like as it does now.

Though many things contributed to the deterioration situation in Afghanistan, I would say none was more important than the failure to properly plan for the operation. The failure to recognize the desperate need for assistance and support that everyday Afghans required was the reason a top down approach was applied. If there had been proper planning, the need for a robust force that was capable of transitioning to MOOTW would have been invaluable towards winning in Afghanistan. Along with the need for a robust military presence to provide the security, a second requirement would be a cadre of civilian experts that would begin the task of rebuilding the infrastructure, government, police and economic sectors.

In the future it is necessary that all elements of national power are applied in confronting any future threats to the United States to avoid repeating mistakes that were made in Afghanistan. True victory in the ongoing and future operations will rely on making sound rational decisions and adopting a long term view vs. a get it done on the cheap approach. Our experience in Afghanistan and Iraq has provided valuable lessons that will need to get institutionalized to ensure there are no missteps in the future and allow nations to benefit from our involvement. It is imperative that we get it right the first time because in the future we may not get a second chance.

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